

Appln No. 10/767,875

Amdt date May 27, 2005

Reply to Office action of January 31, 2005

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Withdrawn) A method of preparing a negative electrode for a rechargeable lithium battery, comprising:

vacuum-drying a negative electrode precursor, the negative electrode precursor comprising a negative active material and an aqueous binder.

2. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the vacuum-drying is performed at a temperature from 80 to 200°C under a pressure of 10 torr or less for 1 to 72 hours.

3. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 2, wherein the vacuum-drying is performed at a temperature from 90 to 150°C under a pressure of 10 torr or less for 1 to 72 hours.

4. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the negative electrode is prepared by coating a negative active material composition on a current collector, the negative active material composition comprising the negative active material and the aqueous binder.

5. (Withdrawn) A method of fabricating a rechargeable lithium battery comprising:

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assembling a negative electrode, a positive electrode, and an electrolyte to form a battery precursor; and vacuum-drying the battery precursor.

6. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 5, wherein the vacuum-drying is performed at a temperature of 100°C or less.

7. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 5, wherein the negative electrode is prepared by vacuum-drying a negative electrode precursor including a negative active material and an aqueous binder.

8. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 6, wherein the vacuum-drying is performed at a temperature from 80 to 200°C under a pressure of 10 torr or less for 1 to 72 hours.

9. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 8, wherein the vacuum-drying is performed at a temperature from 90 to 150°C under a pressure of 10 torr or less for 1 to 72 hours.

10. (Currently Amended) A rechargeable lithium battery in which a total amount of gas is generated [[gas]] during initial charging, wherein the gas generated has a CO content of 30 volume % or less, and further wherein the gas generated has a H<sub>2</sub> content of 0.2 volume % or less.

11. (Cancel).